

Mediations North and South  
Epistemological and Empirical Perspectives  
from Sweden and Brazil

*Göran Bolin, Jairo Ferreira, Isabel Löfgren,  
& Ada C. Machado da Silveira (eds.)*



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# Strangers in the House: Hospitality, Internationalisation, and Mediatisation at a Crossroads

Isabel Löfgren<sup>1</sup>

## Hosting at a Crossroads

Exú, a prominent deity in Afro-Brazilian religious traditions such as Candomblé and Umbanda, occupies a unique and multifaceted role as the *Orixá* (from Yorubá = deity) of communication. Having a mercurial nature, Exú is known as a trickster who benevolently tests the faith of practitioners through puns and riddles. Exú also mediates between the world of the living and the divine and is closely associated with crossroads, symbolic intersections where diverse energies meet. As a guardian of these meeting points, Exú ensures the seamless flow of communication between different realms.

When Göran Bolin asked me to be a Research Coordinator for the Capes-STINT research exchange (2019–2023) on behalf of the Media and Communications Department at Södertörn University, I recognised it as an invitation for a journey into a realm both familiar and unfamiliar. I am a Brazilian with an academic career in Sweden, and a Swede who did all her studies in Brazil and abroad, making me both a “native” and a “stranger” in both countries. While I am a native speaker of both languages and well-versed in both cultures and their histories, in the beginning, I was less familiar with the distinct approaches to mediatisation research by scholars from either country. Finding myself at the crossroads of Swedish and Brazilian cultural and academic *lifeworlds*<sup>2</sup> (Husserl 1982), I summoned the spirit of Exú to guide me through this experience.

<sup>1</sup> Senior Lecturer in Media and Communication Studies, Södertörn University, Stockholm, Sweden, and Research Coordinator of the Capes-STINT research exchange, 2019–2023.

<sup>2</sup> Edmond Husserl’s (1859–1938) notion of lifeworld (German: “Lebenswelt”) refers to the pre-epistemological, everyday world of human experience – the world as it is immediately given to consciousness. The lifeworld is the background against which all experiences and meanings unfold. See Husserl, E. *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*. The Hague: Springer Dordrecht, 1982; also, Birnbaum, D. *The Hospitality of Presence: Problems of Otherness in Husserl’s Phenomenology*. London: Sternberg Press, 2008.

Coordinating a mobility exchange uniting Nordic and Latin American perspectives on mediatisation research, however, required more than translating and mediating between vastly different cultures and distinct theoretical frameworks and epistemologies. As my role grew into becoming a facilitator of research residencies for Brazilian mediatisation scholars coming to Sweden, I realised that the potential of research exchange often exceeds institutional boundaries and requires an intersubjective dimension which is more difficult to quantify and systematise. From a host's perspective, mobility programs entail a large degree of personal investment and affective labour that includes creating a sense of belonging to a "foreign" academic community through mediation, facilitation, and enabling long-term dialogue and relationships built through everyday hospitable acts. To understand this better, I propose to frame research mobility and internationalisation work through a communicational approach to the philosophy of hospitality (Lévinas 1969, 1999; Derrida 1997, 1999, 2001; Flusser 2002). This allows us to highlight aspects that are not always readily apparent in the academic outcomes resulting from research exchange such as the chapters in this collection, and allows us to focus on modes of immaterial and affective collaboration as well as structural issues such as gendered, racialised, linguistic and epistemic inequalities, which are frequently disregarded in discourses of academic internationalisation (Morley et al. 2021). I contend that a language of hospitality helps to navigate and untangle these inequalities at a crossroads that acts as a common ground (Sodré 2014) for dialogue and scientific knowledge co-creation.

### Meeting at the crossroads: From Digital to Physical Presence

The Capes-STINT research exchange commenced right at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, presenting formidable challenges to researcher mobility which lay at the core of the project. Due to the planetary shutdown, our initial interactions took place exclusively online, in a mediated manner. We met through email, WhatsApp, and videoconferencing during various program events such as research exchange seminars ("Jornadas") and the conference *Midiaticom – IV International Seminar on Mediatisation and Social Processes*<sup>3</sup> held entirely online in late 2020.

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<sup>3</sup> *Midiaticom* is a biennial conference on mediatisation research organised by Professor Jairo Ferreira (UNISINOS-UFSM – and who also served as the Brazilian director of the Capes-STINT project. See the conference website at: <https://www.midiaticom.org/>).

In that fully digitised environment, new modes of interaction had to be improvised. Greetings like “Hej!” or “Como vai?” were replaced by awkward introductions like “Can you hear me?” relating to technical aspects of videoconferencing – a hallmark of nearly all academic interactions during that period. The complexity of academic and cultural exchange in online mediums was further exacerbated by illness, technical challenges, time differences, communication breakdowns, and translation issues. We often grappled with multiple languages being spoken in the same room, frequently requiring professional translation services. To untangle this tower of Babel in more informal situations, I often found myself stepping in as a “cultural translator” across different working cultures and facilitating communication between team members in various communication channels. Despite these hurdles, this period allowed for the establishment of personal connections among team members which created a sense of familiarity between the Swedish and Brazilian teams, and allowed for the scientific knowledge co-creation processes that would unfold over the next few years.

When the actual international mobility exchange began in 2022 as post-pandemic travel was reinstated, we already knew each other fairly well. Between 2022 and 2024, the mobility program finally materialised the “research missions” of Brazilian communication scholars from Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM) and UNISINOS flying to Sweden for stays between two weeks and ten months. We hosted eight guest researchers, including visiting Professors Ada C. Silveira Machado, Viviane Borelli, and Aline Roes Dalmolin from UFSM, and Ana Paula da Rosa from UNISINOS; post-doctoral researcher Mauricio Fanfa (UFSM); and doctoral students Camila Hartmann (UFSM), Márcio Morrison and Rodrigo Duarte (UNISINOS). That year, however, presented new geopolitical challenges such as the beginning of the current phase of the Russia–Ukraine War. This affected the visa acquisition process for Brazilian researchers for travel to Sweden causing significant and often costly delays before arrival. In mid-2023, specific events concerning the drawn-out process of Sweden’s NATO application status caused increased security threats to the country, leading to additional border controls and adding further delays in visa applications and entry processes.

Our role as the Swedish hosts involved assisting our visitors in travel and visa arrangements, providing infrastructure for their work in our department, establishing local connections to the Swedish media research environment, and organising their participation in seminars and other activities. Beyond practical matters, however, one major task was to help our guests settle in and navigate uncharted territory as none of our guests had been to Sweden before. Moving abroad was especially challenging for some of the younger “academic

migrants” who experienced travel abroad for the first time. Also, linguistic inequalities came to the fore. In Sweden, using English as a primary language for work and daily communication by non-native speakers, particularly those accustomed to Portuguese, presented both a challenge and an opportunity for learning. Moreover, it was also important to introduce our guests to Sweden’s cultural, historical, technological, and academic lifeworlds, and not least the Nordic weather.

As each researcher kept arriving, I helped translate the local context into terms familiar to a Brazilian mindset, from practical matters such as where to find *erva mate*<sup>4</sup> in local markets, to discussing historical turning points in Swedish and Brazilian general elections<sup>5</sup>, and helping to deal with homesickness or the loss of loved ones at home. In return, their impressions of Swedish life from an “academic migrant’s” perspective made me perceive my familiar environment with new eyes. As such, I was frequently confronted with the inherent dilemmas of the host-guest relationship. That is, meeting the “other” in my home country of Sweden as a native Swede, while simultaneously fully identifying with our Brazilian guests for whom Sweden was entirely unfamiliar at first, and mediating between these two worlds.

### From Internationalisation to Hospitality

Södertörn University (n.d.) defines internationalisation in terms of contracts of academic exchange with universities overseas, the integration of an international, intercultural, or global dimension in education, and the use of English as an academic *lingua franca* in order to increase the quality of teaching and research. Even though mutual agreements, epistemological exchange, and language are essential structures for long-term internationalisation efforts to happen, my experience as a host of the Capes-STINT mobility exchange program reveals that internationalisation work sustains itself long-term through intersubjective relationships. These relationships are not always made evident in institutional internationalisation vocabularies due to their seemingly more performative and individualised character. I contend that these “sticky micropolitics” of “affective assemblages” (Morley et al. 2021) in

<sup>4</sup> A Brazilian herb used for “chimarrão”, a form of tea popular in Rio Grande do Sul in southern Brazil where most of our visiting researchers come from.

<sup>5</sup> General elections were held in Brazil and Sweden between September and November 2022, leading to the co-authored article Löfgren, I., Rosa, A.P., Sartoretto, P. “Das práticas à circulação de sentidos: Olhares sobre a midiatização do processo eleitoral na Suécia e no Brasil”. In: Borelli, V., Neto, F., Weschenfelder, A. (orgs.), *Midiatização, Pandemia e Eleições: Disputas e transformações nas discursividades contemporâneas*. João Pessoa: EDUEPB 2023: 347–372.

this intersubjective dimension can be better understood through a practice of care that requires a more human language and approach in institutionalised contexts. Therefore, in this chapter I propose to consider internationalisation within the framework of the philosophy of hospitality – the ethics of opening oneself to the Other – as conceptualised by Lévinas (1969, 1999), Derrida (1996, 1999, 2001), and Flusser (2002), particularly emphasising the ethical dimension in host-guest relationships.

Hospitality is a philosophical concept that serves to understand ethical dimensions in the relation between *self* and *other*, interiority and exteriority, encapsulated in the dynamic between hosts and guests, which Derrida (2001) defines as “the act of welcoming strangers”. In his writings on ethics, Lévinas (1999), known for stressing the primacy and the priority of ethics over ontology and, indeed, over poetics, puts forth hospitality as a practice that can be traced to specific cultural norms, yet the phenomenon also embodies an ethics emphasising the encounter with the “other” in the world. If we consider internationalisation from the lens of hospitality, it is as much a practical engagement as an ethical commitment. It extends beyond mere institutionalisation and instrumentalisation by contracts and agreements to form a social and ethical bond between subjects that sheds light onto often overlooked human connections in academic cultures otherwise steered by status and productivity.

Drawing on Lévinas, Jacques Derrida (1996, 1999, 2001) wrote extensively on cosmopolitanism using hospitality both as a concept and a phenomenon to rethink a range of political and ethical situations. Hospitality is etymologically tied to *hospis* (Lat. “to care”) and *hostis* (Lat. “hostage”), highlighting its dual nature. The shift from *hospis* to *hostis* suggests a fragile boundary: disregarding hospitality and pushing limits is a transgression, while maintaining equilibrium in the guest-host dynamic becomes the fundamental engagement with the external world. However, this inherently asymmetrical relationship is often conditional to laws and cultural norms that regulate host-guest relationships on several scales, from cultural rituals (i.e. receiving guests in one’s private home), to policies of rights of stay (i.e. visa and asylum applications), and laws between sovereign states (See a critique of Kant’s cosmopolitan rights in Nussbaum 1997). Derrida (2001) advances a critique of cosmopolitanism toward fulfilling the desire for an unfettered movement across borders, aiming to dissolve borders themselves. As such, he introduces the concept of unconditional hospitality, where removing conditionalities unveils a primal care for others, reminding of Lévinas for whom hospitality acts as a foundational philosophy that precedes utility, virtue, and duty (Bergo 2019).

Lévinas (1969) situates this “first philosophy” in the physical face-to-face encounter with the Other, which becomes a communicative act of recognition

where we, when faced with the irreducible and singular presence of the Other become infinitely responsible for *one-another*. Differently than connecting the face or the self with identity, Lévinas uses the encounter to initiate a philosophy of alterity. In other words, one's humanity can only be learned from recognising humanity in the Other and by hosting the Other – in a horizon of unconditional, radical hospitality for ethical being.

The face-to-face encounter has been a recurring trope in media studies where it is often used to illustrate this primal intersection in such a way that it precedes communication itself, or as an example of an unmediated encounter that enables the construction of self in society. From a semio-anthropological approach, Eliseo Verón (2014: 16–17) writes that “the specificity of the face-to-face encounter is not its linearity, but the absence of external media phenomena (...) located in the same homogeneous time-space in oral cultures, located within a (pre-) history of communication”, thus situating the possible origins of pre-mediatic communication. From a sociological viewpoint, Erving Goffman (1967) introduced the concept of “face” as a portrayal of oneself, shaped by the norms and values of a particular society, and the context of social interactions that allow individuals to be perceived by others in certain ways in their immediate surroundings. In *Interaction Ritual*, Goffman's concept of the face-to-face encounter is “a condition for interaction, not an objective” (1967: 12), and describes several rituals that include acts of hospitality drawn primarily from anthropology. Even though the term “hospitality” is not specifically mentioned in his texts, he refers to the ethical dimension between hosts and guests in terms of “etiquette” embedded in “rituals” of social interaction.

When revisiting both Verón and Goffman, I noticed that the body as a material entity tends to be overshadowed by their analytic perspectives. For example, Verón's (1997) concept of *circulation of meanings* refers to circulation as the relation between different grammars of production and grammars of recognition (Ferreira 2016: 200) that, in turn, trigger representational and inter-discursive relations between meanings as they are generated by and as they flow through media and technologies. In this semio-anthropological perspective, the concept of circulation serves to describe how meanings affect and are affected by social processes in a reflexive manner based on this intersubjective and mediated exchange. In order to understand how this intersubjective relationality could also take the body, or embodied experiences, into account within the logic of circulation, I turn to Vilém Flusser's media philosophical approach to hospitality, which I find useful in illuminating the trajectories of our visiting researchers and their dilemmas as “academic migrants”.

## Bodies and Meanings in Circulation

Vilém Flusser is a media philosopher who is often recognised for his contributions in understanding the relationship between culture and technology (See Flusser 2000), but who also addressed the phenomenon of exile, the ethics of hospitality, and the relationship between language and nomadism in his writings (Flusser 2002). As an exiled Jew in Brazil and later in France, Flusser explored how individuals in exile might adopt a more nomadic mindset that embraces the idea of constant movement and adaptation as a way of life both in terms of lived experience and intellectually – by associating dynamics of physical and territorial displacement to different communicational processes and theories of knowledge. His essays provide insights into the connection between displacement, identity, and cultural adaptation concerned with aspects of circulation between linguistics and languages, territories (physical and intellectual), and temporality. In his phenomenological approach, Flusser considers circulation as a collection of “gestures” and a way of entering different states of being in a nomadic movement (2002: 88). Flusser, like Lévinas, also recognises the importance of the *face-to-face* encounter as a primal contact zone in the philosophy of alterity, a situation where dialogue, which he considered as the foundation of language, can begin.

In “Taking Residence in Homelessness” (2002), Flusser describes how the process of cultural and symbolic deterritorialisation of the body of the migrant involves a temporary loss of self in a transitional state of white noise between their place of origin and their place of destination. This white noise hinders the migrant’s ability to recognise signals and to communicate. When the migrant arrives in a new territory, in time these “new” codes become increasingly less scrambled, and he/she starts regaining the ability to decode new signals and regain the ability to communicate. However, the migrant, having suffered a temporary communicational homelessness, emerges from this process transformed by new relations and surroundings, as if born anew, or at least radically transformed by the experience. However, this process of transformation is not one-sided. As migrant bodies displace and circulate, they carry their *lifeworlds* with them and meet other bodies along the way. Upon meeting their hosts on arrival, the hosts also become transformed by their encounter and gain new insights about themselves and their surroundings. The face of the guest acts as a distorted mirror for the hosts, making them more self-aware inside their own home and lifting them from familiarity (2002: 91–93).

In “Exile and Creativity” (2002), Flusser provides an aesthetic dimension where the condition of becoming “un-housed” and “out of place” for both the guest and the host can stimulate new perspectives and creative insights, allow-

ing individuals to transcend traditional boundaries of thought and identities and emerge as “new” beings. Thus, the arrival of the migrant, or the Other, is something that transforms both the guests and the hosts. But given Flusser’s overarching interest in the interrelationship between culture and technology, he also considered the role of communication technologies in the experience of exile and explored how media might serve as both a link to one’s homeland and a means of connecting with a new cultural context (See Löfgren 2020: Chapter 2). I interpret Flusser’s philosophy of exile as an embodied experience that serves as a metaphor for how bodies in circulation create meanings both within and outside of themselves, receiving meanings while producing meanings, and triggering their circulation as in Verón (1997), in several spaces, temporalities, and media logics along their path, and affecting the environment around them.

### Narrating Face-to-Face Encounters

This chapter narrates the impressions of eight visiting Brazilian researchers during their research residencies in Sweden aiming to make visible living dimensions of the Capes-STINT research mobility, which are otherwise not readily accessible in the academic “products” of this exchange in the other chapters in this book. To use Ervin Goffman’s (1959) theatrical terminology, while the scientific chapters in this collection represent the “frontstage” results of the exchange, this text is meant to give access to the “backstage” of the experiences of individual researchers in their role as “guests”. Here, it is possible to see a work of *internationalisation-as-hospitality* as an inter-subjective and “in real life” practice stemming from face-to-face encounters that precede a mediation process.

The empirical material, or *corpus*, mobilised here includes fragments from individual reports by each visiting researcher, written after the conclusion of their residencies in Sweden in 2023 and 2024. Each account is written from each one’s double persona as an “academic migrant” and as living subjects in a form of self-writing (Foucault 1994) resulting in texts that condense what Roger Silverstone (1999) calls the “texture of experience”. I will use fragments of these individual reports submitted to the editors, which were initially intended to be published in their entirety in this publication. However, due to space limitations and the scientific nature of this publication, a late editorial decision arose for me to write *with* these texts in the proposed theoretical framework of hospitality, in which they take the role of guest-writers, and I, as a host-narrator.

I hesitate to categorise this approach as ethnography or any recognisable scientific method involving speculation or interpretation of findings. Here, there is

nothing to be “found”, and insights will be presented as the text unfolds. Instead, I will weave each voice in the text like fragments of a conversation among guests in a symposium, or in a *terreiro*<sup>6</sup>, where each one takes turns speaking and listening, strung along with a mediation by the host whenever needed. As a reader, you are also a guest in this symposium, to whom I extend an invitation to engage, with care, in the lives and reflections of others. In sum, this text serves as a “home” for the experiences of the authors featured in this collection in a dialogic-essayistic format. I recall what Theodor Adorno (1984) noted in his influential piece “The Essay as Form” where the essay functions as “an arena of intellectual experience” in which bits of knowledge can be brought together, tested, and further complicated. If we consider this text as a crossroads of sorts, guarded by the spirit of Exú, then this text also hosts this complication – and, as part of this anthology, also becomes the stranger in the house.

### Estrangements

Visiting PhD student Camila Hartmann tells of what it feels like to travel outside of Brazil for the first time and a fear of not being able to communicate:

Everything was new to me. Many ‘first times’ were unveiled even before arriving in Sweden. I grew up in a small town in the state of Rio Grande do Sul with just over six thousand inhabitants (...) Until my journey to the Scandinavian country [Sweden], my travel experiences were restricted to the Southern Cone [the southern tip of South America] (...) The language issue (...) was my main obstacle to socialising in the first few weeks. Since I had never experienced everyday interaction in English abroad, I was afraid I wouldn't be able to communicate. The initial insecurity was largely overcome by the extreme kindness shown to us by people. – Camila Hartmann

Upon arriving in Sweden, Ana Paula da Rosa reminds of a state of “white noise” like Flusser (2002) identified, which she describes as a “crisis of codes”. She writes,

Arriving in Stockholm was strange. A large and unfamiliar airport. Signs and loudspeakers with sounds impossible to identify. My English mixed with Portuguese allowed me to take a taxi (after detailed guidance from Isabel) (...) from the first hours in Stockholm until the first two or three days when I experienced a code crisis. My knowledge of English was insufficient; Portuguese words kept trying to come out of my mouth, clashing with the English and Swedish I heard

<sup>6</sup> Place where the rituals for Candomblé and other Afro-Brazilian religions take place, usually in circular formations.

in the streets, and in the supermarket, mixed with Arabic and Ukrainian dialects. I did not recognise [words] and could not communicate. This code crisis did not prevent complete communication, but it left me quite uncomfortable, a stranger without the ability to identify sounds as if confused with traffic rules. – Ana Paula da Rosa

Visiting PhD student Rodrigo Duarte recounts his first moments from an embodied perspective and discovering a new identity as a foreigner which he had not experienced before:

This period (...) has been marked by an intense sense of discovery. Discovering cultural differences, a sense of deterritorialisation, linguistic differences, codes and dynamics of interaction, and belonging to a social category with which, despite a theoretical affiliation, I had not yet felt 'in the body': that of being a Latin American from the Global South. – Rodrigo Duarte

Márcio Morrison, another visiting PhD student, experiences yet another culture shock, this time of a guest meeting a different idea of his host country, Sweden, than previously imagined:

The apartment I rented in Sweden belonged to Södertörn University. The impression upon arrival was a complete displacement from my Swedish imaginary. This is because Flemingsberg and parts of southern Stockholm are urbanised by immigrants from all over the world, mostly Arabs who have a strong presence in local businesses such as markets, beauty salons, and small convenience stores. – Márcio Morrison

### Settling in

Except for Viviane Borelli, a Visiting Professor who inaugurated the mobility program in a two-week stay by herself in 2022, all other researchers came in groups, something which facilitated the process of settling in with multiple dynamics of mutual support, both physical and online. Visiting Professor Ada C. Machado da Silveira recalls that

The presence of my colleague from UNISINOS, Professor Ana Paula da Rosa, [who had arrived one month earlier] anticipated some issues that we had to face. The support of (...) Camila Hartmann, my advisee from UFSM, and Marcio Morrison (...) from UNISINOS, was inseparable companionship. Mutual monitoring via WhatsApp helped us face the harsh climate and mitigate adaptation difficulties. The newly formed group allowed us to overcome the isolation of our original family nuclei. The mission carried out together facilitated our integration and was recommended to project members in 2023. – Ada C. Machado da Silveira

Weather, of course, is something to consider when moving to Sweden. Some of our visitors, for example, had never experienced snow, and had difficulties adapting to winter darkness, or the traffic complications endemic in Stockholm due to heavy snowfall. Weather, for Machado da Silveira was read from the perspective of referential points, such as the presence of sunlight and a connection to natural cycles:

[In Stockholm] I experienced the counter-nature life of resilient Swedes, imposing regulations not guided by sunlight [as in Rio Grande do Sul]. And this aspect became, at the end of the experience, the most significant demand for adaptation in Sweden because life in nature in southern Brazil allows us to regulate our daily routines based on sunlight. Moreover, this was a warning that our hosts always emphasised. – Ada C. Machado da Silveira

My role as host also included making sure that all the infrastructure, contacts, housing, office keys, and access were organised even before each guest's arrival. More than mere formalities, these infrastructural elements are essential for building a sense of home. Aware of the difficulty of finding housing in Stockholm as strangers to the city, mindful of proper working conditions for researchers, and having a large contact network, I was aware that our Brazilian guests needed more than formal orientations to guide them at first. As Rodrigo Duarte describes,

From the first contact, even before my arrival, Isabel showed interest in welcoming me with a kind of hospitality that is difficult to describe. Also Brazilian, she probably knows what it's like to arrive in a new space, amidst a new language, with little or nothing familiar in terms of culture. She has guided me in courses I can participate in, academic and non-academic events where I can find interesting aspects for research, and helped with bureaucracy at the university and housing. Isabel has shown me that it is possible to produce sensibilities from relationships that, supposedly, would only be academic. – Rodrigo Duarte

Mauricio Fanfa points out how everyday routines and social interactions in the university department made his transition into a new working environment easier:

The first weeks were also about adapting to the routine and building bonds with colleagues. The department [has] a kitchen, and a socialisation space during lunchtime, where I had good opportunities to assimilate into the department's team, establish relationships, and get to know them better. It is also in this space that I introduce myself as Brazilian, and this identity is recognised and anticipated by the positive experiences the department had with colleagues who were at Södertörn University before [myself]. In such contexts, I could talk about

Brazil, and future partnerships, receive suggestions, present my perspectives, and share experiences. – Mauricio Fanfa

### The Issue of Language

One of the features of international research exchange environments is the use of English as a *lingua franca*. While this feature might be commonplace and often taken for granted in contexts like Sweden and other European countries, as well as in the Global North more generally, English is often perceived as a passive language in other global contexts, notably in Brazil, a Portuguese-speaking country of continental proportions, where despite a political and geographical proximity to North America, English is not regularly used in everyday life, or academic contexts. Ada C. Machado da Silveira observes that,

At Södertörn University, the use of English is systematic, which differs from many Brazilian universities where the use of that language for daily activities is entirely inappropriate, and its use is strictly reserved for reading and writing academic papers. – Ada C. Machado da Silveira

By contrast, Aline Dalmolin points out how English is a widespread academic language in Sweden that favors internationalisation:

(...) Swedes are accustomed to writing in English, and their academic production is heavily in this language. The reason for this is the perspective of speaking the *lingua franca* of the international academic community rather than being confined to the limitations of a “language island,” given that Swedish is spoken only in Sweden. In this context, internationalisation is an experience that unfolds daily throughout the academic community (...) – Aline Dalmolin

When seen relative to other parts of the world that do not have English as a widespread language used in everyday life, such as Sweden, this may cause several barriers. However, even though English is widely spoken in everyday life in Sweden which facilitates foreigners’ access to the local culture, the need to understand Swedish made itself apparent in situations of crisis such as public messages i.e. subways signalling traffic conditions:

But for the living situation, linguistic [Swedish] requirements in the daily life of (...) were still pressing, especially when facing traffic issues resulting from snowstorms. Ada C. Machado da Silveira

Aline Dalmolin highlights the social aspects of “switching” to English which is, in my view, an essential practice of hospitality that entails hosts adapting to the

guest's conditions of participation in conversation, signifying an openness to the "Other" and a hospitable act of kindness in communication:

On several occasions, when approaching a group engaged in conversation in Swedish, the language spoken by the group was kindly switched to English, facilitating inclusion in daily conversations. If the difficulty of communicating in a language as distinct from Portuguese as Swedish was intimidating before coming to the country, the kindness of professors and students in using the English language greatly eased our assimilation as foreign visitors. – Aline Dalmolin

### The Experience of Time, Work, and Affects

Hospitality includes the ability to read each culture's practices of hospitality, practices of communication, and social hierarchies. For example, in Sweden, the non-hierarchical and progressive work-life balance approach towards work contrasts with Brazilian working cultures – a culture that is paradoxically marked by more fixed social and professional hierarchies yet more personal ties between colleagues. These are often reflected in how professional and personal communication in academia often spill into each other requiring constant availability – thus mediatizing working life to a large degree. For instance, Swedish colleagues mainly use email as a medium for all professional communication, whereas Brazilians primarily communicate in multiple individual or group channels on WhatsApp that favors closer interpersonal communication. As a result, some conversations are confined to more informal mediums such as messaging apps, which are consequently often used for decision-making and which overlap with private and leisure time. Ana Paula da Rosa observes that,

Perhaps, of all the experiences observed by this researcher during the exile, the way of managing time was one of the most impactful. [In Sweden] There was no WhatsApp, no meetings outside of working hours, agendas organising bibliographic production were set in advance (in some cases, with planning for half a year), and a care for individual and collective well-being. (...) In Brazil, we live under the pressure to stay connected. Strangely, Sweden is much more mediatized and connected than the countries in Latin America. Many processes are done through apps and machines, but the human dimension has not been relegated to a secondary role. There is a genuine care for time, not only work time but also time dedicated to life that transcends offices and classrooms. – Ana Paula da Rosa

On a second level, hospitality, as a practice of mediation between hosts and guests requires bridging cultural differences in practices of building trust. Whereas Swedes are often more socially reserved which ensures a respect for the privacy of others, by contrast Brazilians are often gregarious and thrive on

continued social contact and inter-dependency where trust is built. This can be seen in cultural practices of digitisation, for instance. Whereas in Sweden many apps and services, including social media, are meant to substitute social interaction for the sake of expediency, efficiency, and convenience, in Brazil apps and services often serve to amplify already existing communicative practices cumulatively. Marcio Morrison, who did ethnographic fieldwork in Stockholm for his study on mediated newsrooms and the symbiotic process between work and mobile technology, makes pointed observations about how social norms and cultural practices may sometimes correspond to media practices in different cultural contexts:

Despite being mediated in various structures, Swedes still live in a system that is very distant from the personal connections we have in Latin America, specifically in Brazil. Facebook and Snapchat, for example, continue to be extremely popular social networks among Swedes, including the younger population. On the other hand, obtaining a Swede's personal phone number is something highly formal and takes time. The overall social distance between people made me realise that this distancing extends to processes of the circulation of meanings and how social media networks are used. – Marcio Morrison

### A Sharpening of the Senses:

#### Cross-cultural Perspectives on Mediatiation

One of the efforts of internationalisation is creating diversity among students and faculty. Marcio Morrison and Camila Hartmann recall the impact of diversity in their experiences as guest doctoral students both as part of the student body and the impact of different courses that opened a cross-cultural, cross-disciplinary, and reflexive perspective in their work:

My doctoral colleagues hailed from various parts of the world: Sweden, Mexico, Italy, Germany, and Indonesia, ensuring a diversity of discussions and perspectives not only on mediatiation and media studies in general, but also on distinct cultures and perceptions of our own nationalities. – Marcio Morrison

[In addition to courses in the Media and Communications department] I also participated in several activities linked to the Department of Journalism at Södertörn, such as Higher Seminars and two courses from its master's program (International Master's Programme in Journalism). This allowed me to establish connections with students from various parts of the world, making my stay more enjoyable [and] contributed to thinking about the methodological challenges involved in [comparative] studies (...), as in my thesis. The texts studied provide a basis for reflecting on the complexity involved in constructing the coverage of the [Russia–Ukraine] war as manifested in the front pages of the Brazilian and Swedish newspapers, produced in such different realities. – Camila Hartmann

Whereas many “culture shocks” occurred at a more personal level, there were also interesting observations made about understanding the very diverse contexts regarding technology, media, society, and everyday life in Sweden and Brazil. Guest researchers’ readings of technical and mediatic realities in Sweden prompted many reflections on different approaches to mediatisation theory itself, but more importantly, it made their home contexts appear in high relief. Mauricio Fanfa’s research, specifically oriented towards understanding cosmotechnics<sup>7</sup> (Hui, 2017) in Brazil and Sweden, serves to understand general differences in technological regimes and how they are perceived and rolled out in both societies, as well as global effects on these perceptions:

The contrast promoted by exchange activities is notable for sharpening perceptions and fostering reflection on the Brazilian situation and our relationship with science and technology (...). In Brazil, technology is regarded as a promise, a solution to everyday problems. When this promise is fulfilled, it comes marked with the challenges and values of modernity (...). We discuss how to survive (or navigate around) the technological innovations that come. I perceive it to be not so different in Sweden, which needs to deal with similar problems. However, technology appears as a product that is difficult to control. Product, in the sense of production, as the country historically produces high technology, is a characteristic part of its economy, giving the debates a tone of power and agency over innovation. On the other hand, the technological production sector has globally been engulfed in political instability, making its control difficult and generating a certain existential anxiety. – Mauricio Fanfa

Others made poignant observations as newcomers to what they perceive as a fully digitised life in Sweden, which differs from patterns of digitalisation in Brazil, as Fanfa observes above. Marcio Morrison observes how digitalisation is embedded in everyday life and makes explicit his perspective as a guest reflecting on technological dependency which seems to be invisible to the hosts perhaps blinded by their environment – what Flusser (2002) called “the cotton blanket of habit”. He writes,

Mediatisation in the city of Stockholm is invisible to the eyes of the Swedes because it is intrinsic to the practices and social processes adopted by Swedish citizens. Let me explain: technological movements are embedded in the “Swedish DNA,” and therefore, residents don’t perceive how much they are mediatised. They simply live in mediatisation; here, it is a natural ambience. This can be

<sup>7</sup> According to Yuk Hui’s (2017) definition, cosmotechnics “is the unification of the cosmos and the moral through technical activities, whether craft-making or art-making. There hasn’t been one or two technics, but many cosmotechnics. What kind of morality, which and whose cosmos, and how to unite them vary from one culture to another according to different dynamics”.

observed in daily practices such as taking the subway, for example. Everything can be consolidated into a mobile device. (...) Here [in Sweden], we perceive transformations in logics based on current social practices and processes. In contrast, these integrated and technological systems are still under development in much of Brazil. Thus, we have distinct mediated times between the two discrepant sociocultural realities. – Marcio Morrison

He also reveals how these cultural differences are reflected in different approaches to mediation:

The overall social distance between people made me realise that this distancing extends to processes of circulation of meanings and how social media networks are used. Despite a deep discussion about mediation [in Sweden], it seems to focus on technology, often confusing researchers with concepts of mediation. In other words, European mediation seems more concerned with the relationship between the subject and technology than with the relationship between the subject, technology, and subject. It is precisely the studies on circulation developed in Brazil and Argentina that underpin this observation, as the point of interest and departure lies in the production of meaning, circulation, and circuits that arise from networks. – Marcio Morrison

Aline Dalmolin reflects on these epistemological aspects, also concerning issues that seem to be more urgent in research agendas regarding mediation, as reflected in each academic context's preferred objects of study and methodologies from a comparative point of view:

Swedish society is heavily digitised, and participating in daily activities with a researcher's perspective on mediation allowed me to reflect daily on practices permeated by these logics. This occurred both in day-to-day activities and through contact with some of the research conducted by Södertörn researchers, who are strongly dedicated to exploring topics like artificial intelligence and the implications of digital culture on society, especially regarding the welfare state. While these topics may seem somewhat distant from the reality observed in Brazil, these approaches enable a prospective comparison, observing traits of our society in its vicissitudes and difficulties (...). – Aline Dalmolin

Taking stock of the differences in approaches to mediation theory in Latin America and Scandinavia, Camila Hartmann notes some interesting similarities and differences, especially regarding Verón's concept of circulation which is less known in Europe:

It was a privilege to learn more about European approaches by personally listening to highly recognised researchers in the field especially keen on hearing different perspectives – the debate around circulation, for example, is less known among Europeans. In general terms, the socio-constructivist approach under-

taken in the Global North has many similarities with the perspectives being developed in Brazil and Argentina. – Camila Hartmann

Ana Paula da Rosa notes that differences in approaches to mediatisation are indeed fruitful, and observes that

(...) within the perspective of mediatisation, it was essential to perceive the numerous possibilities for debate and [theoretical] tensioning. There are many advances [in Sweden] in angles I had not considered, partly because the Swedish group also adopts the long-term perspective of mediatisation, although they deal with other observables strongly influenced by datafication and technological dimensions. For us, the question of the circulation of meanings is central and seems to be a key point for the strengthening of our creative and inferential connections. – Ana Paula da Rosa

Besides the apparent overreliance on technological dimensions in the European mediatisation approaches, da Rosa highlights that there are indeed global hierarchies in a globalised setting that highlight asymmetries and inequalities in terms of the production of knowledge. Some of these asymmetries are often caused by lack of knowledge or access to different epistemologies that require an approximation of worlds, or the creation of a crossroads where different worlds can meet. She writes that

(...) I often found myself challenged to think about how to claim a space for mediatisation in the Latin perspective if we do not know each other. It became clear during this period, not only in Sweden but also in a trip I made to Portugal and Germany for conferences, that our European colleagues do not read us, but at the same time, we all think dialectically. How to bridge this gap? How can I contribute with my texts? (...) Being invited to a panel at ICA by Anne [Kaun], planning joint texts with Stina [Bengtsson], Göran [Bolin], Heike [Graf], and Isabel [Löfgren], even if they are still only in the realm of ideas, is a first move of rupture. The second is to write in English, breaking the language barrier that also separates us. – Ana Paula da Rosa

## Collaborations

As a host, I received these challenges as an opportunity to help create, together with my colleagues at Södertörn, a supportive and stimulating environment for collaboration and co-production of knowledge and to begin to address these gaps. Besides informal daily interactions in our department with joint lunches and coffee breaks (*“fika”*) and after-work activities, all researchers were offered the opportunity to present their research in the department’s weekly higher seminar series consisting of presentations followed by a discussion. These semi-

formal occasions often became launching pads for new ideas and collaborations, as in the case of Viviane Borelli, who co-authored several articles with Södertörn colleagues in English, thus extending her work outside of Brazil. It also provided much-needed visibility for the work of the Brazilian guests whose work may not yet be known outside of Brazil:

The most challenging activity was undoubtedly the presentation for the Higher Seminar (...). After the presentation, I answered questions from participants in English (with some translation help from Isabel Löfgren), and exchanged theoretical perspectives and methodological contributions within the scope of mediatisation research. This presentation led to subsequent meetings with Professor Heike Graf, who was very interested in learning more about the perspective of the Argentine semiotician and sociologist Eliseo Verón on the concept of circulation I introduced in my talk. (...) This environment also resulted in a collaboration with Isabel Löfgren about mediatisation, circulation, and meme cultures that we consolidated later that year<sup>8</sup>. – Viviane Borelli

Collaboration also extended to mentoring visiting doctoral students with joint supervision by Södertörn and Brazilian faculty from UFSM and UNISINOS. This allowed Brazilian students to get valuable theoretical and methodological inputs and access to local resources. It is interesting to note that all visiting doctoral and post-doctoral researchers decided to conduct empirical research in Sweden for their doctoral theses in addition to their existing material and research conducted in Brazil. This required overcoming language barriers and incorporating world events and different realities into their comparative approaches. Ada C. Machado da Silveira sums up this structure of mutual collaboration and support structures, which seems unique to the research environment in the Media and Communication Studies department at Södertörn:

The Research Day<sup>9</sup> activity with some [Södertörn] professors and doctoral students allowed for closer engagement with their intellectual work. Göran Bolin suggested procedures for data collection in the research of our doctoral student Camila Hartmann. Stina Bengtsson provided valuable suggestions for the development of activities for UNISINOS' doctoral student, Marcio Morrison,

<sup>8</sup> This resulted in a co-authored chapter: Borelli, V. and Löfgren, I. "Around the World with the 'Truck Patriot': Memetisation and the Circulation of Laughter in the 2022 Post-Election Period in Brazil". In: Caffagni, L., Löfgren, I., Martins, G. and Sartoretto, P. (eds.) *The Planalto Riots: Making and Unmaking a Failed Coup in Brazil*, Theory on Demand #49. Amsterdam, Institute of Network Cultures, 2024. Several researchers from the Capes-STINT exchange also participated in this book.

<sup>9</sup> Södertörn's Media and Communication Studies department conducts a "Research Day" once every semester where staff can present ongoing research or research applications in a dialogic peer-review process. All members of staff, permanent or visiting, are encouraged to participate.

and Per Ståhlberg assisted in the application of the ethnographic approach, helping overcome challenges related to direct observation of newsrooms during the challenging times we live in. – Ada C. Machado da Silveira

The event [Research Day] had a format that I was not very familiar with but found quite interesting – professors and doctoral students provided feedback on each other's work to enhance the submitted texts. I felt in a healthy and safe environment for collective knowledge construction. – Camila Hartmann

### Shifting the Gaze

Recalling Flusser's (2002) journey of transformation of the migrant, it is interesting to see how the research residencies in Sweden transformed the Brazilian guest researcher's way of seeing and understanding their position as media scholars in the world. Aline Dalmolin recounts how being distant from her home environment allowed her to see her research object, the development of far-right platformed discourse in Brazil, in a new light. And in turn, this new "way of seeing" allowed her to perceive similar political movements more clearly. She writes,

But the most important factor to be highlighted was the opportunity, once situated in a Scandinavian context, to construct the perspective of a 'foreign gaze' on one's own culture. This allowed for a differentiated view of the (...) issues I have been working on concerning the circulation of disinformation and hate speech in the extreme right-wing media sphere in Brazil. The establishment of a 'foreign gaze' from an ethnographic perspective, a subject widely debated in the field of anthropology, enabled a reflective look to understand the points of intersection and division with the mediatisation experience of extreme right-wing discourses in Europe and other related phenomena. – Aline Dalmolin

### Reciprocity

Host-guest relationships are not only built on responsibility and mutual support – they are also built on the principle of reciprocity. In December 2022, the Swedish team had the opportunity to travel to UFSM, in Santa Maria, Brazil, and participate in a conference where we felt welcomed and taken care of by their staff and students. It also made possible the deepening of personal ties of friendship and continued collaboration. Lastly, an important aspect of hospitality is engaging in cultures of sharing, where food is an essential factor – something which Exú, the guardian of the crossroads is especially enchanted by. Viviane Borelli opened her own home to receive us and recounts her gesture of hospitality in the form of gifting:

With the same kindness I received in Sweden, after the conclusion of the *V International Seminar on Mediatiation and Social Processes* in December 2022, I had the pleasure of opening my home to welcome our Swedish colleagues (...) Cultural experiences were intense: from the Gaúcho barbecue with the typical ribs to the traditional Brazilian caipirinha, carefully made by after harvesting fresh lemons. It was possible to show a bit of life in the interior of Rio Grande do Sul, in a calm place surrounded by nature and with an abundance of fruits, vegetables, and greens. – Viviane Borelli

After these four years of intense exchange, first online and later through physical researchers' mobility, the universities in the Capes-STINT research exchange have begun to draft pathways of continued collaboration beyond the project. For example, an exchange agreement between UFSM and Södertörn makes it possible for Brazilian students to study in Sweden with a waived fee, and Södertörn sent their first visiting doctoral student to UFSM, Saralie Sernhede, in 2024.

### A farewell...até logo!

These rich and diverse experiences evolving through time were possible thanks to a well-structured relationship between hosts and guests, and the practice of hospitality in the project – a perspective that can enrich future forms of international collaboration and increase the visibility of scientific production from both sides. As Camila Hartmann writes,

At Södertörn, I felt welcomed and encouraged to establish genuine dialogues with the high-quality science produced in Brazil. (...) Brazilian studies on mediatiation need to be more recognised so that there can be effective dialogue, and I am proud to have been part of a movement to increase our deserved visibility. – Camila Hartmann

But more importantly, this enables the creation of a community with a sense of belonging. As Mauricio Fanfa writes,

The familiarity (...) is like being among friends of friends. The sense of belonging is essential for the well-being and productivity of being in a distant place, while also encouraging and qualifying intellectual exchange, the ultimate goal of the international research networks we have built. – Mauricio Fanfa

And Ana Paula da Rosa complements with a remark from a decolonial approach,

The immeasurable role of this project is not only to enable student and teacher mobility but to allow us to effectively recognise ourselves as peers, breaking with the colonial systems that still prevail, including in science. – Ana Paula da Rosa

## Concluding Thoughts

I conclude this “symposium” with the words of Ada C. Machado Silveira, who ends her report by writing a conclusive statement that harkens back to the values involved in the practice and ethics of hospitality. In short, *internationalisation-as-hospitality* enables the creation of long-lasting bonds and dialogue necessary to form and maintain a community. She writes,

Finally, I would like to point out that the differences in academic culture have been overcome by us and in future missions through the observance of some cultural similarities. *These similarities relate to the zeal, care, respect, and commitment* to the individual and collective intellectual formation of the young people who come to us. Furthermore, the critical perspective that we have developed together regarding the increasing mediatisation of society is pertinent. The final result of this activity, as discussed earlier, proves to be promising for the North–South dialogue. – Ada C. Machado da Silveira [author’s emphasis]

Each visiting researcher’s impressions on their stays in Sweden created a narrative that underscores the importance of viewing internationalisation efforts through the lens of hospitality rather than solely through institutional frameworks. By emphasising the host-guest relationship and the intersubjective dimension of research exchange programs, I hope to have highlighted the human connections and ethical responsibilities involved in facilitating academic mobility. This perspective expands beyond contractual agreements and institutional structures to acknowledge the affective labor and personal investment by both guests and hosts required to create a welcoming academic community.

However, this process presents certain challenges and transformations experienced by both hosts and guests during research mobility exchanges. From navigating language barriers and cultural differences to overcoming geopolitical obstacles and different epistemological approaches and lifeworlds, the exchange process involves multifaceted experiences that extend beyond academic outcomes and an academic culture based on status and measured by productivity. Through personal accounts and reflections, the essay captures the complexities of academic “migration” and how it reshapes individuals’ perceptions and identities about themselves and their intellectual production which has long-term effects and is kept through continued friendship and intellectual affinities.

Drawing on concepts from philosophy and media theory, the chapter also explored the embodied circulation of meanings within the context of research mobility. By invoking the figure of Exú and referencing thinkers like Lévinas, Derrida, and Flusser, the narrative illustrates how encounters between scholars

from different cultural and academic backgrounds at an epistemological crossroads may generate new insights and perspectives. This circulation of meanings, facilitated by face-to-face interactions and mediated communication, enriches the intellectual landscape and fosters creative dialogue across disciplinary boundaries, academic cultures, and spheres of knowledge production that may not be possible otherwise.

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